

FRANCO-GERMAN RELATIONS 1871-1914

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Act of Algeciras. These advances, however, were rudely interrupted by an incident which, like the Schnaebelen crisis twenty years earlier, for some weeks threatened the peace of the world. Some German residents in Casablanca, aided by their Consul, had established an agency for organizing desertions from the Foreign Legion, and in September, 1908, it persuaded two Germans, a German naturalized as a French citizen, a Russian, a Swiss and an Austrian to desert. The Consul provided them with civilian clothing, hid them for some days, and resolved to embark them in a German steamer lying off the port. Early in the morning of September 25 they were accompanied to the harbour by a member of the Consulate, but their boat capsized and they were forced to return. The Commandant of the harbour noticed them and gave orders for their arrest. A brief struggle ensued, and the German Consul vainly demanded the liberation of the three Germans.

Baron von der Lancken, Secretary to the German Embassy, appeared at the Quai d'Orsay and demanded "prompt and complete satisfaction." Pichon, the Foreign Minister, replied by demanding that the German Consul should be disavowed and censured. Neither side wished to fight, but the temperature rose rapidly. After a fortnight Germany proposed arbitration, which Pichon accepted. The Wilhelmstrasse, however, demanded the punishment of the port authorities at Casablanca and the release of the three German deserters, after which the German Consul would be punished. When Pichon rejoined that the matter was now referred to arbitration, the Ambassador again demanded the immediate liberation of the three Germans who had been injured in the scrimmage, and the Chancellor threatened to break off diplomatic relations.

Pichon stood firm, and replied that he must await the arbitral award. The Chancellor now asked for an apology for the arrest of the deserters before the arbitration began. At this critical moment encouragements to stand fast arrived from London and St. Petersburg, and Francis Joseph persuaded the Kaiser to settle the question amicably, since the Bosnian crisis had begun. The storm subsided as suddenly as it had arisen. A declaration was signed by the two Governments regretting the events at Casablanca and referring questions of fact as well as of law to arbitration. The verdict of the Hague Tribunal, given some months later, censured "the grave and manifest fault" of the German Consulate in aiding the escape of the non-German legionaries, and added that the French authorities